

Summary of key learning from year 1 of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal

The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal (PLHR) was launched on the 30th January 2017 at City Hall. This new housing pathway is a **voluntary collaboration** between **local authorities** and **registered housing providers** and **support agencies**, centrally coordinated by Safer London and funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

It increases options for people with a **social housing tenancy** in London who are at **high risk of harm** (including domestic abuse, other forms of violence against women and girls, hate crime, gang-related violence and other high-risk community safety concerns) and need to relocate to another area of London in order to **remain safe and not lose their social tenancy**.

This report outlines some of the emerging trends from the past year alongside a breakdown of PLHR activity.¹

Overview of activity in year 1

By the end of the first year of operation, **32 local authorities and 38 registered housing providers** (including all of the G15 group) had signed up to the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal, representing housing stock across every London borough.

In year 1 Safer London circulated **214 referrals** to support individuals and families who needed to move borough, in addition to responding to 344 enquiries who were provided with support to make a referral, advice or signposting. Partners **offered 155 properties** over the year. **On average**, there were just under **3 moves per month**, and a total of **82 individuals were moved to safety**: 39 adults and 43 children. The relocations were made **across 25 London boroughs and supported by 37 different housing partners**. Requests have been made from residents in every London borough and **all London boroughs have been requested at least 30 times** (some applicants request all boroughs apart from risk areas).

The collaborative approach was very effective in both securing a move and facilitating as smooth as possible transition.' Voluntary Sector Support Worker

Overview of households referred

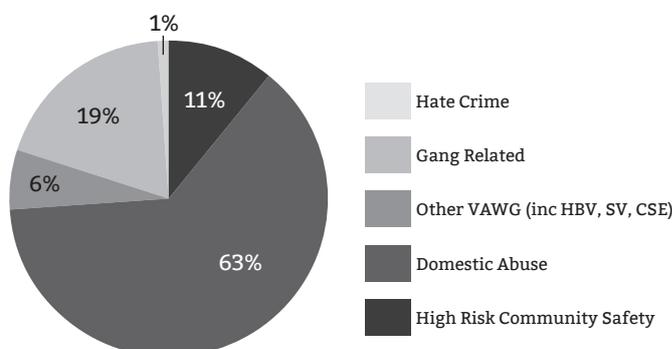
The majority of referrals made (78%) were for **single women with children**. This was the case across all referrals, regardless of the type of violence the family was fleeing from, with the exception of hate crime. The

next biggest category was single women (13%). 83% of referrals were made for individuals aged between 25 and 54. 11% of referrals were made for those aged 18-24 and 3% were for 55 and over. 60% of referrals were for people from BME or mixed heritage backgrounds.

Risk from violence/abuse and support needs identified

The majority of PLHR referrals were made to support households whose **primary reason** for the referral was **domestic abuse**. Other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) included sexual violence, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and so-called honour-based violence (HBV). Community safety included witness of violent crime, and all hate crime referrals so far have been homophobic hate crime.

Primary reasons for referral in year 1



Multiple forms of violence and disadvantage

28% of households referred to the scheme recorded that they were **also fleeing another form of violence**. 18% of domestic abuse referrals had another form of VAWG as secondary reason for referral, mainly sexual violence (15%). We also saw an intersection with CSE and gang-related violence.

For **47% of applications, additional support needs were recorded for a household member** (other than violence/abuse). In **29% of referrals we received**, someone within the household reported having a **mental health need**.

¹Referral forms were completed with varying levels of detail, therefore we can only highlight indications of trends and need at this stage, based on available data from the first year of operation.

Additional housing barriers facing households fleeing violence

Arrears

Many housing schemes will not re-house individuals with rent arrears. The PLHR allows applicants to be referred to move who have arrears, recognising this as a common factor for households affected by violence and abuse. 31% of applicants had arrears. **29% of applicants whose primary reason for referral was domestic abuse had arrears.** This was often highlighted as due to financial abuse, or being unable to maintain employment due to the abuse.

Overcrowding

Research has suggested that in London approximately 14% of socially renting households were overcrowded.² Of 179 referrals for non-single applicants, **almost half (45%) were living in overcrowded conditions.** Overcrowding can act as a barrier to re-housing as some providers will not offer properties to overcrowded households. Through the PLHR some partners have put households forward for larger properties on an agreement that they will reciprocate a larger property to another household.

Floor requirements

Ground floor properties are in short supply in London's social housing stock. **Over one third of all applicants (35%) had a specific floor requirement in their property request.** 12% specified that they needed a ground floor and 23% needed a lower floor or another requirement (e.g. a lift). About half of the applicants who had a floor requirement specified that this was due to a physical health need or disability. **15% of applicants recorded a physical disability within the household.** Other reasons included a mental health need, learning or developmental disability, or having young children.

Learning on the PLHR process

Property Requests: probability of receiving an offer

50% of the applicants referred in the first year have so far received a property offer. The biggest factors affecting the probability of receiving an offer were: the number of bedrooms requested (fewer larger properties available); types of referrals (gang-related referrals received fewer offers); the number of boroughs requested; and whether there were any floor requirements.

Waiting times

Waiting times to access social housing in London are very high and averages are sometimes published on councils' websites. Redbridge, for instance, published an average waiting time in 2016/2017 of 6 years for a 1-bed, 8 years for a 2-bed and 11 years for a 3-bed.³ For the 34 households that accepted a property in the first year of the PLHR, the waiting time on average was a little over 2 months.⁴

² <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/overcrowding/>

³ <https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-options/waiting-times-for-housing/>

⁴ Please note that this is only for the 34 households who have been offered a property and have accepted it.

Tenancy types

Most applicants (62%) referred to the scheme held Secure or Assured tenancies, others had assured shorthold or starter tenancies. In most cases, equivalent tenancies have been offered by the partner housing provider. There have been occasions when a greater security of tenancy was received, and an example where a less secure tenancy was accepted based on property type/location. Applicants can refuse offers and are not taken off the list by Safer London; however, we need to continue to monitor this to ensure no household feels compelled to take a less secure tenancy. Only 4% of property refusals recorded so far were due to change in rent or tenancy type; most were based on property size/type or location

Referring and supporting agencies

In total, over a third of referrals (36%) were referred by a non-housing sector agency. Of these, 23% were referred by a VAWG agency. Nearly all referrals (97%) reported being supported by at least one additional agency apart from a housing provider; 91% of referrals mentioned support from a statutory service and 73% mentioned support from a voluntary sector service. Support from the voluntary sector was higher for applicants who successfully moved, at 87%.

'I feel more secure and safer, I feel I can start making decisions that don't involve thinking about him or looking over my shoulder.' Feedback from applicant

'[The tenant] is overjoyed and is able to get her life back together again without fear to her life.' Feedback from a professional supporting the applicant



For forms, guidance and further information see: www.saferlondon.org.uk/plhr

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